![FDLP - Federal Depository Library Program]

State of the Federal Depository Library Program, 2018-2019

Executive Summary
2021

The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) was established by Congress to ensure that the American public has access to its Government's information. Since 1813, select U.S. Government documents have been made available throughout the United States and its territories to designated libraries and historical societies. The current authority for the Federal Depository Library Program and the legal obligations of designated Federal depository libraries are found in 44 U.S. Code §§1901-1916, and includes a provision for a report every two years on the conditions of depository libraries. The Biennial Survey of Depository Libraries (Biennial Survey) has been used since 1947 by depository libraries to meet this requirement of §1909.

The Superintendent of Documents recognized that the Biennial Survey does not tell the entire story of a depository library's operation. To convey the broader picture of the conditions in depository libraries this report, *State of the Federal Depository Library Program*, is based on not only the 2019 Biennial Survey results, but on the observations of Library Services and Content Management (LSCM) staff during various interactions with depository personnel and library administrators. This first issuance of the report covers the period January 1, 2018 – December 31, 2019. It fulfills 44 U.S. Code §1909's requirements for the Superintendent of Documents to report on conditions at depository libraries.

Library Services & Content Management Observations and Responses

Federal Depository Libraries — In General

There were 1,120 Federal depository libraries (FDLs) of varying types and sizes in the FDLP at the end of the reporting period. Of these, forty-six were regional depository libraries. For a variety of reasons, twenty-six selective depository libraries relinquished their depository designation while four libraries joined the FDLP. Three of the four new libraries are all-digital, i.e., they are not receiving tangible materials through the FDLP. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) were represented.

Depositories by Library Type	Count of FDLs
Academic Community College	52
Academic General	616
Academic Law Library	143
Federal Agency Library	33
Federal Court Library	10
Highest State Court Library	35
Public Library	174
Service Academy	4
Special Library	14
State Library	39
Total	**1,120**

Table 1: Federal Depository Libraries

A challenge faced by FDLs was turnover in depository coordinators; it was at 25% during this period. Another difficulty many depository libraries, and particularly regionals, are facing is space constraints for their collections. They are exploring and entering into shared collection agreements. Twenty-four or 52% of regionals are in such arrangements. The need for flexibility is key, and the Superintendent of Documents responded by allowing and providing guidance for inter- and intra-state collaborative agreements.

Depository Library Collections

The average number of receipts for the 1,048 Federal depository libraries (FDLs) that received tangible material during the January 1, 2018-September 30, 2019 time frame was 1,530 publications; almost 30% of FDLs received less than 200 publications. Using estimates based on a snapshot from Documents Data Miner 2 for December 2019, 71 depository libraries (6% of all FDLs) received no tangible material. Anecdotal evidence indicates interest in becoming a digital depository remains high among depository coordinators and library administrators.

LSCM introduced Special Selection Offers in 2019 in response to depository libraries' frequently stated wish for more flexibility in choosing individual titles. Special Selection Offers allow libraries that do not select the item number for a significant publication to have a one-time opportunity to request and receive an individual title in tangible format. These one-time offers are used for publications that are of significant public interest or that are best suited to a print format because of their design or length.

Most selective depository libraries are weeding their collections regularly, and some are undertaking massive weeding projects, making this one of the most frequent topics of consultations and training requests. To allow regional depository libraries some flexibility to discard materials, in 2016, the Superintendent of Documents issued a policy allowing this under certain circumstances. It wasn't until 2019 that the *Public Papers of the Presidents* became the first title eligible for discard under this policy.

In 2018 LSCM launched FDLP eXchange, a tool to assist depository libraries with offering their no-longer-needed publications to other FDLs that may wish to add them to their collection. This process facilitates retaining depository materials in the National Collection of U.S. Government Public Information. Use of FDLP eXchange is not required, but strongly encouraged—282 FDLs used it in CY 2018-19. In its first 1½ years, 252 depositories listed offers and 105 uploaded needs; 15,472 publications were claimed.

Access to Depository Collections and Services

The raison d'être for the FDLP is to provide free public access to the U.S. Government's information. The primary ways to make depository materials accessible are to promote awareness of the collection and to provide tools that facilitate discovery of Government information products.

LSCM catalogers are the nation's experts in cataloging Federal Government information products, producing records for all publications distributed through the FDLP as well as for online and historical Government publications. *Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* (CGP), a major resource for depository library coordinators and online researchers, is populated with their records. LSCM also strives to help depository libraries easily obtain these records for use at their own institutions, primarily through the Cataloging Record Distribution Program (CRDP) and by making records freely available on GitHub.

The CRDP provides GPO-produced catalog records to participating Federal depository libraries at no cost to the libraries. By the end of this reporting period, the number of participating libraries increased by twenty, to a total of 205 libraries. At the same time, LSCM worked to expand catalog record offerings to libraries through the CGP on GitHub initiative. Comprehensive sets and subject or collection-specific sets are freely available to download, including but not limited to:

- CGP MARC Records.Online FDLP Basic Collection.

- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Collection.

- American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian (AIANNH) Subject Based Resources.

- Online version records without Item Numbers.

FDLP library websites or guides to Government information may be difficult to find. With increasing numbers of remote library users, and more depository libraries' reliance on digital resources, it is important that this be addressed.

In an effort to assist libraries in this area, in 2019, LSCM launched 'The Essential FDLP' where user stories and videos about the importance and value of the FDLP were shared. Earlier that year, a working group of the Depository Library Council (DLC) conducted a review of the websites of libraries that had identified themselves as all-digital. This resulted in the DLC making [recommendations for best practices for digital depositories](#) in spring 2019. Additionally, LSCM developed:

- "Website Wednesday" – a weekly feature offering tips and suggestions for making the FDLP more visible on libraries' webpages.

- A new FDLP decal suitable for website use, along with suggested best practices for how to self-identify as an FDLP member on their websites.

LSCM Engaging with the Depository Library Community

One way for the FDLP to remain relevant is to evolve in response to the changing needs of the libraries participating in the program. Outreach, direct contact, and engagement is vitally important to these efforts.

GPO on the Go, during 2018-2019, saw staff visit 185 depository libraries in 27 states and the District of Columbia. Libraries requested training on 26 topics, and 132 training sessions were provided during library visits. Other benefits of the visits, in addition to the opportunity to provide customized training, were realized, including:

- Strengthened relationships between the regional and their selectives, between LSCM and the regional and the selective depositories, and between LSCM and depository library administrations.

- Facilitated LSCM's understanding of the management of different depository regions.

- Created LSCM staff awareness of depository library initiatives and work.

- Raised awareness of and participation in LSCM initiatives such as the CRDP and partnerships.

- Increased LSCM's awareness of which libraries have unique or rare collections and can help depository staff understand their own collections better.

- Helped retain libraries in the FDLP.

- Facilitated improvements at depositories.

- Generated enthusiasm for the FDLP and helped to maintain FDLP visibility.

Several different library types are represented by the member libraries of the FDLP. The needs of one type do not necessarily meet the needs of the other library types. Targeted outreach activities to better understand these unique communities was begun in 2018 with the tribal college libraries (TCL). Outreach resulted in LSCM providing FDLP and Government information services to help them best serve their depository users. LSCM staff participation in the Tribal College Librarians Institute (TCLI), ongoing selection of tribal related materials for inclusion in the FDLP, creating and disseminating tailored catalog record sets with subjects of interest to TCL patrons (and refreshing the sets quarterly), and collaborating with the Office of Minority Health within Health and Human Services and with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to promote materials that serve the needs of tribal college libraries are examples of outcomes from this targeted outreach. With successful results, LSCM will expand targeted outreach efforts to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

The FDLP works closely with depository libraries and other institutions to form partnerships that will benefit the public and the depository community, by providing access to resources and services for Government information. In 2018-2019, LSCM entered into fourteen new partnerships with thirteen depository libraries, bringing the total number of partnerships to 68. Thirteen of the partnerships were libraries becoming Preservation Stewards, that is, they agreed to retain specified depository resources and be responsible for preventive

maintenance and conservation of those materials. The other partnership was for a library becoming a Cataloging and Metadata Contributor, to assist LSCM by providing bibliographic data or serial holding information for material not available in the CGP. More details about these partnerships and the other existing partnerships is on the [Partnership](#) web page on FDLP.gov.

The FDLP Academy provides free training and programs to depository library staff and the broader depository community. Training is in the form of webinars, webcasts, online certificate courses, and two annual conferences—the Federal Depository Library Conference in the fall, portions of which are virtual, and the virtual Depository Library Council meeting in the spring. Academy presentations are given by FDLP community members; LSCM and GPO staff; and Federal agency staff. In 2018-2019 there were 275 presentations, which were extremely popular, as evidenced by the more than 5,400 attendees. Additionally, there were almost 3,300 logins to the virtual portions of the conferences and 233 Fall 2019 in-person attendees during this time frame.

Promotion and marketing of the FDLP is an indication of an active and successful depository library, helping expose more users to Federal Government information. GPO on the Go visits, submissions to LSCM's social media campaigns, library use of social media, and word-of-mouth are some ways in which LSCM staff become aware of libraries' promotion initiatives. LSCM also engages with depository libraries by further promoting what they are doing through GPO's social media channels and on FDLP.gov. By learning about library initiatives, promotional or otherwise, LSCM can adjust its programs and guidance, as appropriate, to respond to changing practices in the FDLP community.

2019 Biennial Survey of Depository Libraries—Results

The 2019 Biennial Survey was conducted from September 23, 2019, to November 18, 2019. The survey contained 22 questions; an additional four questions were asked of those libraries having tangible depository collections. Though required of all depository libraries to complete, 1,069 responses to the survey were submitted, from a total number of 1,123 active depository libraries, for a return rate of 95 percent. LSCM GPO followed up with non-responding libraries and received eight additional surveys, increasing the return rate to 96 percent. The data from the eight libraries that responded to the survey after the cutoff date are not included in this analysis.

LSCM compiled and provided Biennial Survey Region Reports to each regional depository coordinator. These reports include the survey responses for all libraries within the state or area served by the regional depository coordinator. The region reports can help regional depository coordinators better understand the scope of the collections at the selective depository libraries they serve, what services are available in the region, what projects and initiatives are underway in the region, and where attention may be needed. The complete set of region reports is available online in the File Repository.

NOTABLE RESULTS
• 92% of responding libraries plan to remain in the FDLP.
• 97% of responding libraries indicated that anyone can enter their library and use Federal Government depository resources in all formats free of charge.
• 60% of responding libraries have at least 76% of their tangible depository collection fully cataloged.
• 99% of responding libraries have staff who can respond to inquiries related to Government information.
• 47% of responding libraries indicated they did not have an event in the last two years that affected their FDLP operation.
• 45% of responding libraries indicated that FDLP publications in need of repair are included in their library's collection care programs.
• 66% of FDLP libraries with tangible formats currently have either extra small or small collections of FDLP-issued publications in paper.
• 9% of FDLP libraries with tangible formats have either large or extra-large collections of FDLP-issued publications in paper.
• 3% of respondents indicated they do not have any tangible publications.
• In general, the tools and statistics used to track and evaluate depository services and usage are inconsistent and not uniformly employed throughout the FDLP.

Table 2: Notable Results

As the reason for the FDLP is to have a place for the general public to go to have their Government information needs met, it is encouraging that 97% or 1,040 of libraries responded in the affirmative to this question, "Can anyone (general public, and your library's primary and non-primary patrons) enter the library and use Federal Government depository resources in all formats and receive reference services free of charge at your library?" An additional 1% or nine libraries are their state's highest appellate court library and exempt from this requirement by 44 U.S.C. §1915. Of the remaining twenty respondents who clarified their "No" answer, fifteen indicated access is restricted, one indicated computers, one indicated staff, and three provided answers indicating that in fact no remedy was needed.

Critical to access is the provision of records in the library's catalog for depository materials. Of the responses, 819 or 77% of libraries indicated that more than half of their collection is cataloged; and the number of libraries that indicated 76-100% of their collection is cataloged increased by sixty-nine or 6% since the previous Biennial Survey. Eighty-five per cent, or 908, of responding libraries acquire bibliographic records for the catalogs; over half of those are availing themselves to record services offered by LSCM—Cataloging Record Distribution Program (CRDP), copy cataloging after reviewing New Electronic Titles (NET), transferring records through the Z39.50 search protocol of the CGP, or downloading records from the CGP on GitHub. Of the 1,069 Biennial survey respondents, 665 or 62% are interested in receiving cataloging record sets. The top five categories of records libraries would like to receive are: (1) by item selection profile; (2) for historic print content that has been digitized; (3) for changed or updated records; (4) by subject; and (5) by agency.

In the Biennial Survey, tangible depository collections were viewed separately by format: paper; microfiche; and CD-ROMs/DVDs. However, the question that asked if libraries are weeding their tangible collection, viewed the collection in its totality, not separated by format. There were 1,037 or 97% of libraries that responded to the 2019 Biennial Survey that some portion of their depository library collection was tangible; and only 17% or 180 libraries that indicated they weed their tangible collection. The number of medium and large paper collections remained fairly steady from the 2017 Biennial Survey. The number of extra small and small libraries combined represents 66% of depository libraries, while large and extra-large represent 9%. The table below conveys paper collection size comparisons between the 2019 and 2017 Biennial Surveys.

Biennial Survey Year	2019 (1,037 responses)		2017 (1,050 responses)		Key to Collection Size
Paper Collection Size	Frequency	% of Total Responses	Frequency	% of Total Responses	• Extra small – Up to 10,000
None	0	0%	1	0%	• Small – 10,001 to 100,000
Extra Small	311	30%	354	34%	• Medium – 100,001 to 500,000
Small	377	36%	359	34%	• Large – 500,001 to 1,000,000
Medium	222	21%	220	21%	• Extra Large – 1,000,001 and over
Large	57	5%	55	5%	• Unknown/unable to determine
Extra large	41	4%	36	3%	
Unable to Determine	29	3%	25	2%	*Table 3: 2017-2019*

Biennial Survey Comparison

A number of libraries responding to the 2019 Biennial Survey could not determine the size of their microfiche or CD-ROM/DVD holdings. The numbers increased dramatically from the 2017 survey; for microfiche there was an increase of 136 libraries, and for CD-ROMs there was an increase of 70 libraries. These figures make it difficult to generate meaningful collection size comparisons. It is clear, however, that libraries are withdrawing tangible

electronic formats; 204 libraries reported having no CD-ROMs/DVDs in 2019, compared to 159 in 2017. The number of libraries reporting no microfiche in their collection decreased from 176 in 2017 to 136 in 2019.

A Biennial Survey question asked respondents to select all that apply to this question, "My tangible collection is ..." A number of options were available from which to choose, and with multiple answers being acceptable, so percentages do not add up to 100%. Of the choices related to location, "Located in open stacks in a separate area in the library" received the most responses with 737 or 69% of all respondents. Following in decreasing order were "Integrated with other library collections" – 675 or 63% of all respondents; "Located in closed stacks" – 277 or 26% of all respondents; "Located in offsite storage" – 162 or 15% of all respondents; and "Located in shared housing within or outside my institution" – 74 or 7%. Additional responses included Circulating collection at 437 or 41% of all responses, and Non-circulating at 236 or 22% of all responses.

The importance of online content from Federal agencies increases with each passing year. As LSCM does not disseminate digital files, depository libraries were asked how they discover online content to include in their collection. The top ten responses were:

1. Subscribe to FDLP News and Events (535)

2. Review LSCM's New Electronic Titles (453)

3. Search **govinfo** (351)

4. Search the CGP (330)

5. Vendor catalog records (323)

6. Browse subject guides (318)

7. Browse agency websites (294)

8. Search/browse digital collections (278)

9. Subscribe to discussion lists (266)

10. 10. LSCM's CRDP (27)

Other methods of discovery include agency mailing lists or press releases, GPO's social media channels, the news media, email alerts, networking/conferences, and reliance on regional or consortium.

Determining how to make digital content accessible to library patrons, many of whom are remote users, can sometimes be a challenge. Most if not all depository libraries are using multiple platforms to render online Government information discoverable. As indicated above, 819 or 77% of Biennial Survey respondents indicated that more than half of their depository collection is cataloged, and 984 or 92% of respondents indicated that their library's catalog remains a primary way in which depository materials are found. Reference assistance, the library's website, finding aids or subject guides, and local hosting a digital collection follow at 85%, 71%, 66%, and 4% respectively. Other creative methods are gaining in popularity, including but not limited to, implementing a discovery layer to their catalog, use of public computers, subscribing to commercial databases, linking to harvested

websites or digital collections, using social media, creating exhibits (online and in the library), providing instruction and outreach, and electronic interlibrary loans (ILL).

Depository library staff have plans over the next two years to increase digital access to their collections, while decreasing the footprint of tangible materials. The planned activity with the highest response, 270 or 25% of all respondents, was to weed their physical collection. This was followed by inventorying collections at 352 or 33% of responding libraries; training staff in the use of Government information at 316 or 30% of responding libraries; and retrospectively catalog publications at 270 or 25% of responding libraries. All of these are planned at a higher rate than for the previous two years. Additionally, there were 180 or 17% of responding libraries that identified "other" plans, with the top three of those planned activities being physical collection work, digital collection work, and reference/outreach/marketing. Percentages can exceed 100% because libraries were allowed to "select all that apply."

GPO Next Steps

GPO will use the findings in *State of the Federal Depository Library Program* to inform delivery of FDLP services, and its own strategic planning—as allowed by budget and staffing.

- A very high percentage of libraries remain committed to being in the FDLP and providing public access; GPO will continue to fully support them.

- Providing an emphasis on the National Collection will help ensure continuing public access to important Government information.

- Library visits highlight the strength of FDLP network and also give insight into how GPO can best focus its customer service; these will be continued.

- Understanding that there is a high level of coordinator turnover, GPO will provide targeted training, support, and outreach.

- GPO will provide continued support for regionals who want to explore shared regional models or initiate new agreements.

- GPO will continue to use the successful FDLP Academy platform to respond to depository libraries' stated training needs.

- The majority of depository libraries still have tangible material in their depository collection. GPO will aid with depository collection management.

- GPO will investigate ways to provide customized bibliographic record sets using a variety of subjects/topics and selection methods.

- GPO will continue to offer popular free promotional items and marketing guidance.

Conclusion

The strength of the FDLP lies in its network of experts and their ability to assist their library patrons with finding and using the needed Government information. LSCM provides quality cataloging, distributes and disseminates publications widely, and trains and consults with the staff at depository libraries. Depository libraries in turn manage collections and provide access to and services for the publications of the FDLP, whether in print or online.

At the end of this reporting period there were 1,120 depository libraries. Though twenty-six libraries left the program, there were also four that joined the FDLP. With depository libraries located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, the FDLP network remains steadfast, and Government information is accessible.

Depositories are doing more than ever to increase access to depository resources. As cataloging greatly enhances accessibility, it is noteworthy that the rate of cataloged tangible depository collections has increased significantly in the 76-100% range over the past two years. The number of libraries participating in the CRDP is 205, an increase of 20. Additionally, of the 1,069 Biennial Survey respondents, 665 or 62% are interested in receiving cataloging record sets; LSCM should pursue this interest further. While catalog records; reference assistance; the library's website; and finding aids or subject guides remain the primary means of providing access to Government online content, additional and increasingly popular means of access include, but are not limited to, hosting digital collections; providing a discovery layer to their catalog; linking to harvested websites and digital collections; and using social media.

Ninety-seven per cent of depository libraries have a tangible collection, with the majority of them located in its own area of the library. Though some collections or portions of them, are integrated into other library collections, held in off-site storage or included in shared housing arrangements. Selective or extensive weeding of tangible depository materials was in the plan of 65% of libraries for the period covered by this report. At the same time, the number of digital-only depository libraries increased from twenty-two to sixty-two. Additionally, this reporting period began with 229 or 21% of depository libraries self-describing their collections as "mostly digital". Anecdotal evidence suggests the weeding of collections is, in part, being driven by the desire for a more or mostly digital depository library collection.

Though faced with resource challenges, depository library staff have plans over the next two years to increase access to their collections, particularly to users of digital content. They intend to undertake retrospective cataloging; digitizing Government publications; inventorying and weeding collections, training other library staff in the use of depository materials, preservation-related activities; marketing and outreach to reach new audiences; and moving to a more, mostly, or all digital depository library. Some of these activities are planned at a rate greater than in the previous two years.

To continue to improve the state of the FDLP, LSCM will continue to work on:

- Refining FDLP Academy content to meet users' changing needs.

- Helping libraries raise the visibility of the FDLP.

- Providing quality support services at the individual level to depository libraries and their staff.

- Cataloging and helping to preserve the National Collection.

Overall, the state of the Federal Depository Library Program can be characterized as strong. For more than its 150-year history, the FDLP and its libraries have changed their daily operations, but they remain dedicated and unwavering to their essential purpose of connecting library users with information from the United States Government and *Keeping American Informed*.